

DOUBLE DISSOLUTION

Much has changed in the arena of Federal politics since Clive Palmer (Journalism student) penned the following article. Proposing to sketch the cases both for and against a possible (now certain) double dissolution, he submitted two articles to *Semper Floreat*, the first of which we now present. While there are aspects of his case against such a decision by the Federal Labor Government which may be debateable, his blunt approach seems likely to provoke a wider appreciation of the intricacies of Federal Government for those who have not as yet given thoughtful consideration to this matter.

Next issue (May 2nd): the case for a double dissolution.

MR WHITLAM SHOULD HOLD A DOUBLE DISSOLUTION THE ARGUMENT AGAINST.

In 1971-1972 the Australian economy, according to much of the Rupert Murdoch owned press, was in dire straits, so called unemployment being the major problem and the Prime Minister Billy McMahon being the brunt of everyone's jokes. The result of an election in 1972 could only mean the end of 23 years of Liberal-Country party coalition government, and Billy McMahon as Prime Minister. And so it came to pass that the L-CP party lost the election to the ALP and McMahon lost the Prime Ministership to Gough Whitlam.

Conditions in March 1974 have not changed much; the economy is still in dire straits, this time by the menace of inflation. Inflation is galloping along under the pressure of record industrial trouble, heavily increased government spending and haphazard economic policies. The situation has now been reversed - Labor politicians are now the brunt of everybody's jokes. It is with good cause too, or so the Australian public would claim. This fact is evident by (a) recent Gallup Polls (b) the result of the Labor endorsed referendum of December 8 1973 and (c) the Parramatta by-election. Below are the results of the referendum and the Gallup from which definite anti-Labor conclusions can be drawn. Labor favoured control over prices and income.

Liberal win in Parramatta confirmed the belief, that the ALP win in Federal election of 1972 was not to be regarded with any permanence. Ten months after the ALP win in 1972, it was faced with a 7% swing against it. The Hobart Mercury had this to say in regard to the direction in which the political climate of Australia was heading at that stage.

'Ordinary people are beginning to have doubts about the rosy future Labor has promised and the Government's ability to carry through its policy without demanding too high a price.. people are realizing that in the end, political manna does not come from heaven, but from tax payers pockets.' (Hobart Mercury)

And in March 1974, the direction hasn't changed, only moved with more intense speed and force. For Whitlam to hold a double dissolution now would mean a political destruction of the ALP government and a return of the L-CP to office.

The 1972 election confirmed the Australia party as a permanent force on the Australian political scene. The party averaged 2.5% of the national vote, and .5% of the vote in seats that it contested. The important fact, however is that the Labor party won because of Australia Party preferences and was able to form a government.

The Liberals have made attempts to win the Australian Party preferences in

Mr Snedden and Mr Barton have lunched together and it now seems likely that the Liberals have an even chance of obtaining the AP Preferences.

One could hardly see how the opposition would lose an election based on the economic mis-management of the economy. The average weekly wage in Australia has slipped behind the rate of inflation in the last 3 months of 1973. Figures released on February 26 by the acting Commonwealth statistician Mr J. G. Miller showed the average wage rose by 3.04% or by \$3.40 to \$115.20. In the same period the price index rose 3.6%. So prices are rising faster than the wage and the dollar won't go as far, and in fact many Australians find themselves paying a larger percentage of their wage in taxation than under the L-CP government. All this will take its toll in the downfall of the Labor Government if a double dissolution was to be held.

'The National Summit Meeting of the Liberal Party challenges the Federal Government to hold an election on its performance to date' - these words were spoken by Mr Bill Snedden on behalf of all those present at the national summit meeting of the Liberal party.

National Summit Meetings of the Liberal party and Federal Council Meetings have redesigned much of Liberal policy and the party has tried to use the resource of ideas to the fullest. The Country Party has been holding many conferences to update policy and to reform it. In the Country Party strong point of Queensland one such conference was held on 27 and 28 October, 1973. Areas such as Social Welfare, Consumer Affairs, Education, Urban and Regional development, Industrial Affairs Tourism and the Economic policy were discussed and this no doubt was a step in the right direction as these areas have long needed revision in the Country Party. The new policy taken will no doubt fall into their new image, as they put it

'A National vision for Nation Greatness'

This new national image together with possible amalgamation with the DLP will present Whitlam with a new and forceful rejuvenated opponent, if an election was to be held at present. The Labor government can ill afford to waste a possible 20 months of rule in the house of Representatives. Elections called by the Government during its term can often result in disaster or near disaster as can be seen by looking at the Liberal double dissolution of the early sixties and the Heath election this year in Great Britain. If a double dissolution was called, the Labor government would not face a weak and unprepared opposition in 74 as they did in 72. But an attractive alternative to 15 months of continued Labor bungling beginning with the Murphy raid on ASIO and cumulating with the disastrous mismanagement of the Aboriginal Affairs department.

In the area of defence it seems the L-CP DLP policy represents the true feeling of the Australian people; this can be seen by looking at the vast amounts of political fire thrown at the government over the past few months in press and parliament. Most noticeable would be the Peek Report by a former chief of naval staff, which appeared in a 5 page spread in the Naval League of Australia. Peek stated when referring to new equipment purchased in this year's spending as 'seriously endan-

gering the security of Australia by a limited expenditure and cutback of new naval equipment.'

The Liberal party has found the philosophical basis in many areas for a successful assault on Labor policies. The Liberal party has done more than just unify the party, it has also given the country a leader and a direction in which to head. The team of Snedden, Anthony, Frazer, Lynch, Peacock and Street, Chipp and Stacy present a young and progressive team, and at an election would be capable of meeting the Labor challenge. Snedden would hardly face the unhappy electorate that McMahon faced in 72; at least they would not be unhappy with Snedden's performance. Whitlam would be another story.

Trouble between Mr Hawke and Mr Whitlam would also not enhance Labor's chances. Israel and the Philipino workers seem to be the main cause of trouble. Mr Hawke said that the ACTU executive considered the scheme to fill vacancies at the Leyland car assembly plant as 'very unsatisfactory'. The minister for Immigration Mr Grassby said 'Australia would no longer discriminate against migrants on a racial ground' (Australian, March 2). This was seen by many as an end to the White Australia Policy and would be a thorn in Labor's side in any election in the near future.

The Aborigines represent one of worst areas of mis-management and mis-understandings of justice in the history of any government. The auditor General Mr Steele Clark in a report tabled in Federal Parliament March 5, 1974 accused the department of 'unorthodox and irregular practices in which many cases had been contravened against the Audit and Treasury acts.' The Australian government would face a tough task to win an election under such circumstances. After the report was tabled the deputy chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, Mr Jarman said that the committee would hold a public inquiry into the affairs of the department.

Mr Whitlam's failure to see Charles Perkins meets justice for what many feel was a breach of the public service act and the handling of the Bob McLeod affair in which the Prime Minister admits 'there may have been a mis-carriage of justice' (Courier Mail, March 7). All these points would have a cumulative effect if an election was to be held at present. Mr Whitlam would be ill-advised to hold a double-dissolution now - for if he did he would lose the Government.

The 'It's time' connotation still holds water only this time for the Liberals and without the It's Time slogan in 1972, the Labor government might not have been the Government today; as the deputy opposition leader Mr Philip Lynch said in March of 1973:

'The It's Time slogan was the brightest and most bouncing baby ever to be conceived and brought forth with the marriage of advertising and politics.'

It is unlikely that the Labor party could afford financially a campaign similar to that of 1972 which left the party in financial ruin. Without such a campaign they would most surely lose. Gough Whitlam should not hold a double dissolution.

Clive Palmer, Journalism I Student.

PRICES AND INCOME REFERENDUM NATIONAL RESULTS

PRICES

FOR	AGAINST
3,089,139	3,962,093

INCOME

FOR	AGAINST
2,420,315	4,612,085

Here we can see a definite swing against the government endorsed proposals.

THE GALLUP POLL

	ALP	L-CP	DLP	AP	OTHERS
1973 February	51%	40%	4%	4%	1%
April 7	53	38	4	4	1
April 21	48	41	5	4	2
May	44	44	4	6	2
June	46	45	4	3	2
July	49	45	2	3	1
August	47	44	4	4	1
September	46	46	3	4	1
October	42	49	3	5	1
November	44	46	4	5	1
December	44	48	4	4	
1974 February	44	46	4	5	1

State by state results for 1974 February, while only broad indications, show the Federal Labor vote behind the L-CP score in most states.

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS
ALP	43	47	39	53	38	40
L-CP	46	51	51	44	55	45

It seems if there had been an election in Feb 1974, it would have resulted in a win for the Liberal-Country party. In Feb 74, the Labor party had a drop of 7% in the vote from their 1973 figures, according to the Gallup poll. This points to a tremendous swing against Labor, by the people of Australia and spells disaster for the Whitlam government should it hold a double - dissolution.

The Parramatta by-election was the first test of Labor party policy in action, and the Labor party was given a severe let down. The

next election and if they succeed in obtaining them even the bumper year of ALP voting would not save the Whitlam government and all pointers point to the fact that Whitlam would not receive anywhere near the support that he did in 1972. The AP views are best expressed by their National Convenor, Mr Gordon Barton who said on February 26 this year -

'We are obviously interested to use such influences with both the Liberals and Labor party to do those things we in the Australia Party think important.'

"ELECTORAL POLITICS"
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IN THE
COMING
ELECTIONS:

THE COMMUNIST PARTY
THE AUSTRALIA PARTY

